

## **ATSUGEWI VILLAGE**

**SUMMARY:** In small groups, students will make a model of houses used by the Atsugewi including: earth lodge, bark house, and summer residence.

**GOAL:** To learn more about the lifestyle of the Atsugewi by building some of the structures of a typical village.

**OBJECTIVES:** Students will be able to: (1) Describe the three homestyles used by the Atsugewi and for what purposes each type was used. (2) Explain what materials were used in the building of each of the three structures. (3) Demonstrate their knowledge by building a model of an Atsugewi home.

**GRADE LEVEL:** Third through Fifth.

**TIME REQUIRED:** two 45-60 minute periods.

**LOCATION:** Classroom.

**MATERIALS NEEDED:** Bark, twigs or small sticks (gathered from dead and down material, not live trees), and mud, clay, or other like material to cover the earth lodge surface. Twigs or small sticks must be straight to provide framing for the structures. Large pieces of flat cardboard to make the houses on(2ftx2ftor3ft.x3ft). Size of materials used to make the houses depends on classroom space and size of cardboard.

**SUBJECTS COVERED:** History/Social Science, Language Arts, Science, Visual and Performing Arts.

**KEY WORDS:** Atsugewi (awt soo gay wee), earth lodge, bark house, summer residence

**BACKGROUND FOR TEACHERS:** Background information is contained in the student brief, Atsugewi Houses, which is taken from information contained in the Anthropological Records, 14:2, Atsugewi Ethnography, by Thomas R. Garth, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1953, and *Indians of Lassen* by Paul E. Schulz. The Indian Ways Nature Trail located at the north entrance to Lassen Volcanic National Park off of State Highway 44. The Indian Ways Nature Trail has life sized examples of all three of these Atsugewi homes.

**INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE:** Explain to the students that they are going to learn about the Atsugewi's by building a model of their homes and village. Have the students read the student handout, Atsugewi Houses. Have the students answer the following questions. Discuss their answers as a class.

**Questions:**

1. If you were a wealthy Atsugewi, what kind of a house would you live in during the winter?
2. Who might live with you in your winter home?
3. What kind of a home would you have during the summer?
4. If you were a poor Atsugewi, what kind of house would you live in during the winter? During the summer?
5. Who would help build an earth lodge for a family?
6. Which of the three kinds of Atsugewi houses do you like the most? Why?

After answering the questions, divide the students into groups of 2, 3, or 4 per group. Assign each group a type of Atsugewi home from the three types described in the handout. Or let the students chose which house they would like to build and then divide the class into groups. You may wish to have the students gather the materials needed as a homework assignment and build the houses in another class session. After all the materials needed are gathered, then have each group plan and build their Atsugewi house as described in the handout. Houses could be built outside if space was available. Have each group share their house with the class. Note: If the class is small you may wish to have the students build their own house instead of in groups.

**EXTENSION/ENRICHMENT:** (1) Research and make other Atsugewi structures. (2) Share your "houses" with other classes. (3) Use your houses to make a display of Atsugewi homes for your school, community, a local museum, or local business that has display space. (4) Have the students make a village with the houses.

**ASSESSMENT:** Completion of the houses and student answers to the questions provide samples for assessment. Have the students give oral presentations about the lifestyles and environment associated with the houses and the Atsugewi culture.

## ATSUGEWI HOUSES

Atsugewi lived in mountain meadows with rivers, streams, and forests surrounding them.

It was a land dotted with volcanoes and other volcanic features. The Atsugewi used three main types of housing, earth lodges, bark houses, and simple summer residences. Earth lodges were the most elaborate and substantial buildings. Earth lodges and bark houses were both used for winter homes while branch and brush enclosures to keep wildlife away from food and other belongings were used for summer homes.

Earth lodges were dug into the earth about three feet deep. Large posts formed a frame to support smaller framework. Planks, split logs, and bark were used to cover the frame. The entire structure was covered with a layer of dirt. The roof was covered with a thick layer of grass and dirt. An opening was left in the roof near the strong center support post serving as an entrance and smoke hole. A ladder made of stout logs and rungs tied together with serviceberry withes (thin, flexible branches used to tie things together) was placed through the entrance hole beside the center support post. A heavy mat was placed over this opening or, in really bad weather, a slab of bark was used. A low entrance was placed at the front of the lodge which served as a ventilator shaft and entrance for children. This entrance was closed with a screen of woven willows or tules with grass stuffed behind the screen at night to shut off the drafts. With this limited ventilation, the fire would burn down to coals and keep the lodge warm all night without additional fuel. Friends and relatives helped a family build an earth lodge. The women used digging sticks to excavate the pit while men built the rest of the structure. It often took two or three weeks to build one of these homes. Several families might live in a large earth lodge, each being assigned to their own space. People slept on mats made of tules and used blankets made from deer and elk skin, woven rabbit skins, patchwork rabbit or fox skins, and loose tule or grass.

Bark houses were used as winter houses by poorer people. These were built over pits about 6 inches deep. A square or rectangular wooden frame was built with bark placed on the framework. Dirt was piled high along the base to keep out the cold. A fireplace was located in the center of the floor under a smoke hole in the roof. In the middle of one of the longer sides a doorway was left, which was closed with a tule mat. Another design simply had center supports with logs and bark leaning against them, and dirt piled along the base of the bark walls.

Summer residence was the name given to Atsugewi summer camps. They were circular enclosures of brush, juniper, or other conifer limbs or of rock. They were ten or fifteen feet across with openings to the east. There was no roof, although branches and bark slabs might be put over simple frames in rainy weather.

